ITEMS HANDED OUT TO
HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD
BY OWNER'S ATTORNEY
AT 03/15/23 HPB MEETING

Document for:
Architectural Significance Letter

Local Historic Designation Number:
LHD 2022-13

Subject Property:
517 Aragon Avenue
Coral Gables, FL

February 14, 2023
City of Coral Gables
Historic Preservation Department
405 Biltmore Way
Coral Gables, FL 33134

To the Authority Having Jurisdiction:

Design Space Architecture has been entrusted by the new property owners of 517 Aragon Avenue, Coral Gables, FL 33134 to carefully analyze and evaluate the Architectural embodiment associated with the existing single-story residence, and to interpret the local historic designation report issued by the Historic Preservation Board as it relates to the historic significance of the subject house. My team and I have over 20 years of experience dealing with historic homes in Coral Gables. We have played critical roles in remodeling, renovating, and upgrading historically designated properties such as 1403 Obispo Avenue, a minimal traditional home built in 1947, 1309 Obispo Avenue, a Spanish Revival house built in 1946, and a number of other homes in the City of Coral Gables. Further, we have been involved in extensive remodels and renovations for some of the venerable homes in Coral Gables without the benefit of historic designation such as 700 Navarre Street built in 1925, 1131 Venetia Avenue built in 1926, 1435 Mercado Avenue built in 1953, and the list goes on.

Upon thoroughly studying the LHD report, documentation, and drawings provided to our team by the current property owners, and upon several meticulous visual inspections of the property, we have concluded that the house does not exemplify the historic and cultural significance of the community during the era in which it was constructed, does not strongly portray any one distinctive architectural style, and it does not display Architecturally significant characteristics or styles as they relate to the Architectonic strategy, means or methods of construction when it was designed and built.

It is apparent that the house has undergone several modifications throughout its history that have unfortunately removed its inclusion in the group of historic homes that exemplify the story of minimal traditional homes built in the 1930's. These homes were meant to be an Architectural response to the strenuous economic times. As such, one feature of this house was the carport fashioned on the west side of the residence. When Frank Lloyd Wright coined the term "carport" in his Usonian homes, the intent was to move away from fully built garages and provide an economic solution to storing vehicles. The minimal traditional style of this home was aligned with that notion but has been tarnished by the removal of its carport and the inclusion of a double garage on the main frontage of the building. The existing carport was originally flush with the façade and added to the continuous horizontal language of the home, as commonly done with the minimal traditional style. The construction of the two-car garage modifies the overall horizontality of the house since the new garage is about 18" proud of the original front wall of the building. The building volume inserted for the garages introduces a segmented rhythm along the front façade that creates a push/pull effect unlike what one would expect from a modest architectural style like minimal traditionalism. Please see the massing study included in the narrative report.

In our review of the prominent Architectural language for the house, we noticed the inclusion of exposed rafters on the eaves of the house's front entry. These rafters have decorative rafter tail designs which was clearly a move on behalf of the original Architect to insert touches of ornamentation to the home. These decorative gestures create an overtone similar to that of which is often experienced in the detailed, intricate, and picturesque Mediterranean Revival style; a far-cry from the modest and unassuming minimal traditional stye. As such, this adds to the overarching design of a home that does not create a tie to the historical and cultural significance of the community during that era, does not strongly portray any distinctive features of minimal traditional Architecture, and is not an embodiment of the architectural style or methods of construction that would lead to cost effective planning.

DESIGN SPACE ARCHITECTURE

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To further our stance on why this house does not meet the criteria outlined by the historic preservation board, the removal of decorative features does not appear to be an overarching concept for this house since an expressive semi-circular entry to the existing porch was designed. This would have called for formwork that is above-average in complexity and would have required skilled laborers. A custom screen must be fashioned to fit the arched geometry. Further, the house currently has custom iron work railings on all of the fully rounded arches. As such, this increases the complexity of the home and leads to a spike in cost of construction which steps away from the cost-effective rational associated with minimal traditional architecture and does not exemplify the economic and social trends during the period in time when it was built. Lastly, geometries such as the semi-circle entry to the house create an elaborate focal point which is not used to exemplify the minimal traditional architectural style.

Other exterior modifications were noted on all sides of the house, and they have lessened the minimal traditional design logic. These modifications include the sealing of various window and door openings, the enclosure of the front porch, a rear terrace enclosure, and the construction of large sized windows and door openings. These changes have removed the small and modest presence that the minimal traditional style represents and have instead created expansive and oversized components that contradict its original Architecture.

In an attempt to explore options to salvage the home and its original design, we looked into the feasibility involved with reversing some of these modifications made to the house. This would have to be done in conjunction with various proposed modifications including, but not limited to, a one story extension towards the rear of the property and/or a two-story addition. Said modifications would be needed in order to accommodate the new property owners and their plans to create and raise a family. Said alterations will require major renovations that would include extensive demolition and reconstruction to the house including:

- New Garage concrete columns, footings, and tie beams are tied to historic structure with rebar. Roofs are tied together as well, and would not be able to be separated without extensive cost burden.
- Entry and rear porches that have been enclosed have new HVAC vents that are dedicated to the space. The HVAC system would need to be redesigned, and new openings and doors would need to be poured in for entries and exits.
- New window and door openings, stairs, and more around the home would require extensive concrete re-work and demolition, perhaps causing the need to reform the tie beam adding prohibitive cost to the work. The work would include modifications to the structural, electrical and mechanical systems and would make the project not financially feasible. The house as is, is also a floor plan that is not conducive to living for a family due to the limited numbers of rooms, kitchen space, and more. Please see appendix attached for more photos and notes.
- Underpinning the foundation and major structural reinforcement to be able to incorporate a second story addition in the event that our client and our team determine that the extra square footage will be needed for the intended lifestyle of the new property owners.

The alterations that the house has experienced through it's time have pushed it further and further way from what could have been considered a humbly designed home in an era where cost of construction was a major driver in Architectural design. We urge the Historic Preservation Board to move away from designating this property as local history. Coral Gables has a plethora of beautifully significant local gems, and including this home as part of that group would dilute the esteem of being labeled as a historic home in Coral Gables. Further, I implore the board to entrust in the meticulously appointed Board of Architects that will undoubtedly aid in approving a design that adds to the embellishment of the city beautiful.

Respectfully,

STATE OF FLORIDA
JOSE I. CARDONA
AR101665
REGISTERED ARCHITECT

Jose I. Cardona, AIA, NCARB
Principal Architect at Design Space Architecture, Inc.

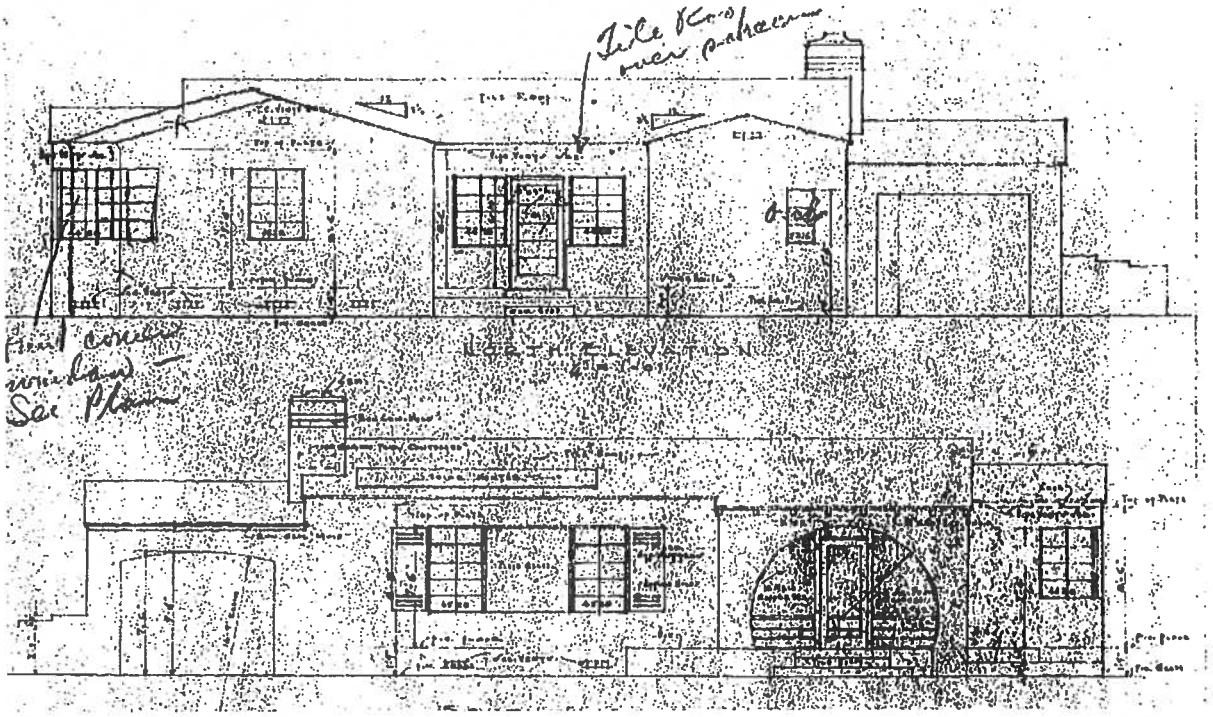
DESIGN
SPACE
ARCHITECTURE

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE APPENDIX

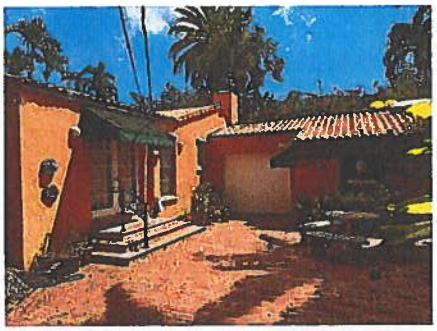
Prepared by Joey Cardona
Principle of Design Space Architecture

February 14th, 2023

Architectural Style

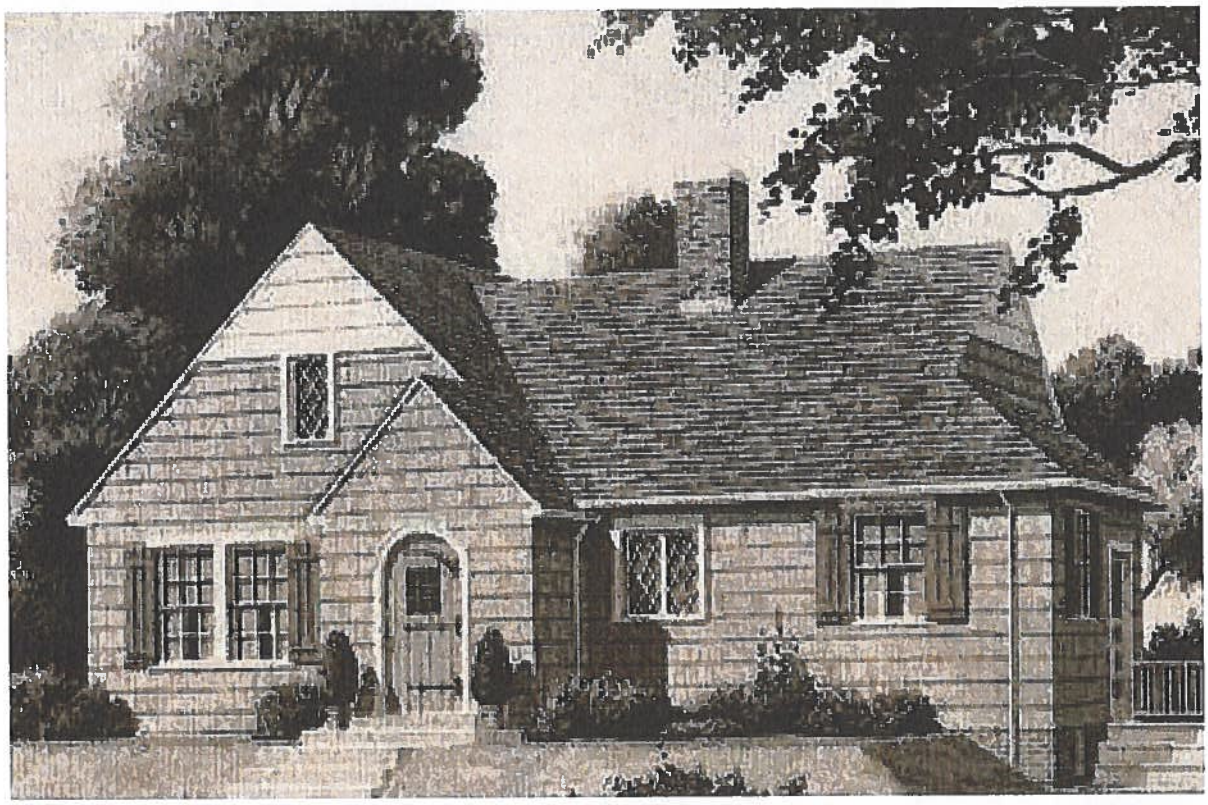


Original Elevation by WH Merriam

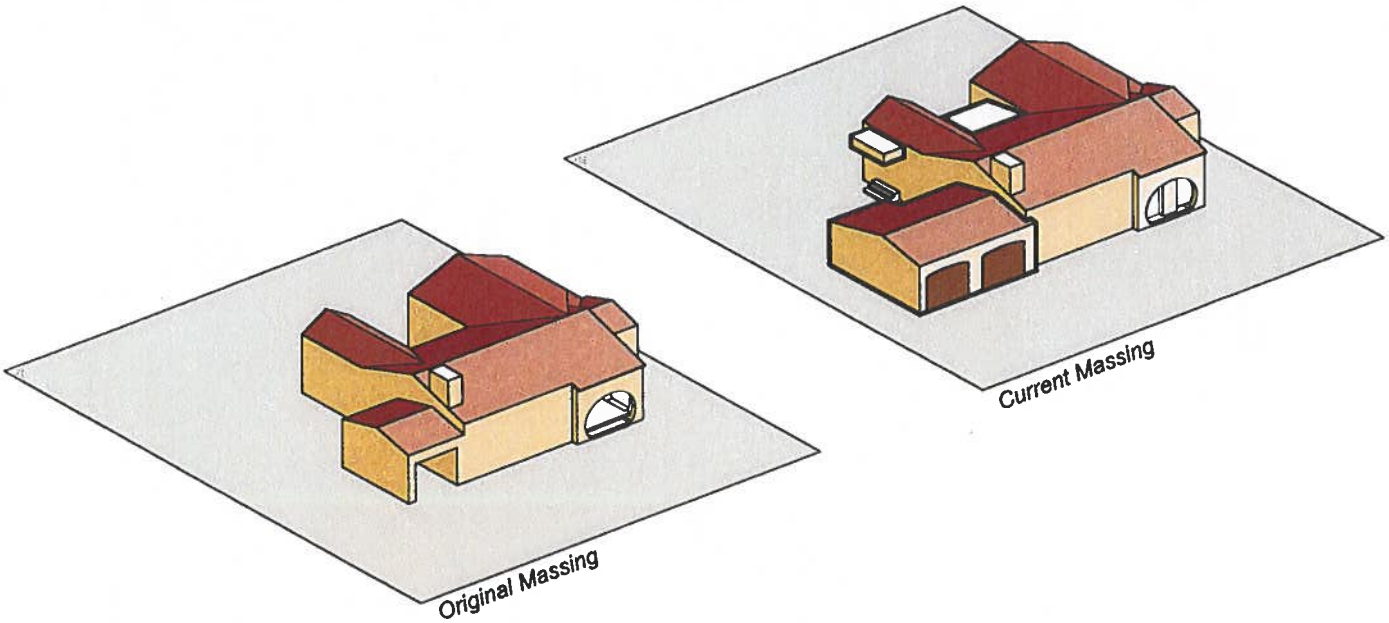


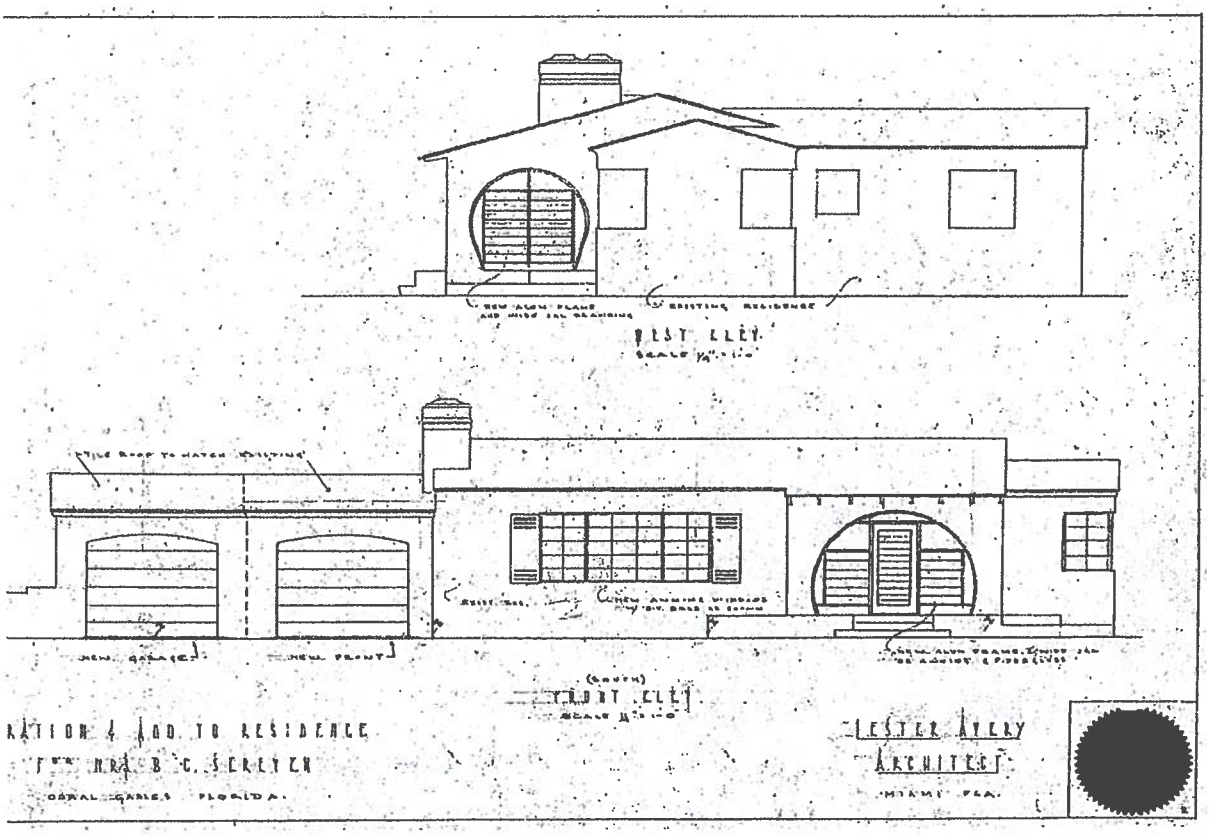
Current Photos of South and North Facades

Examples of "Minimal Traditional" Homes



Massing Study

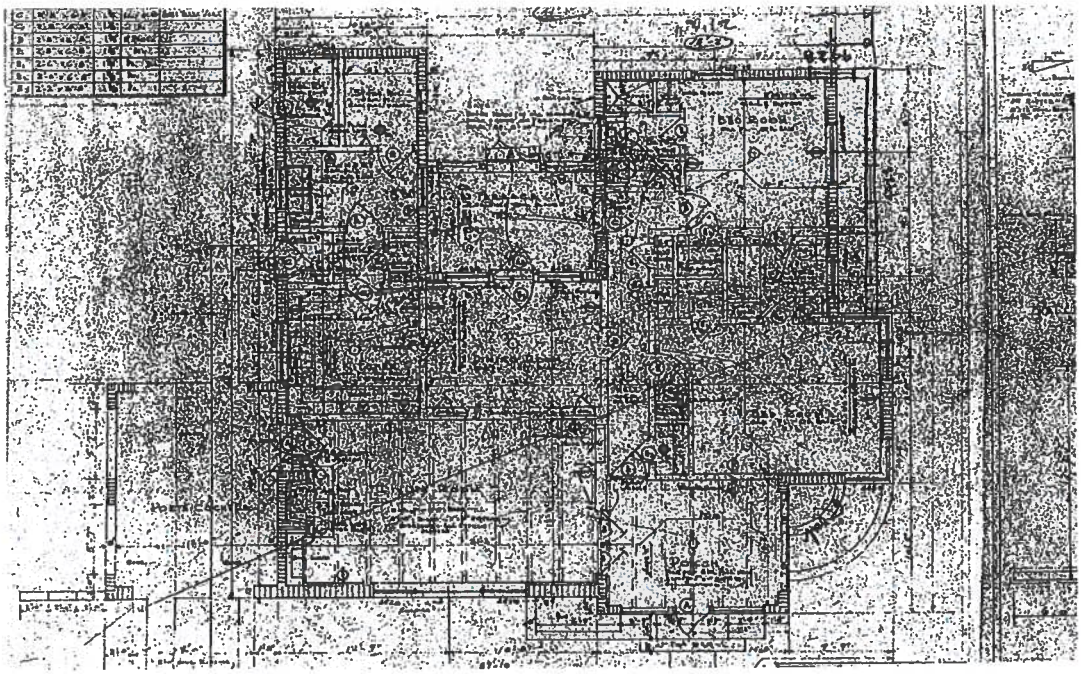




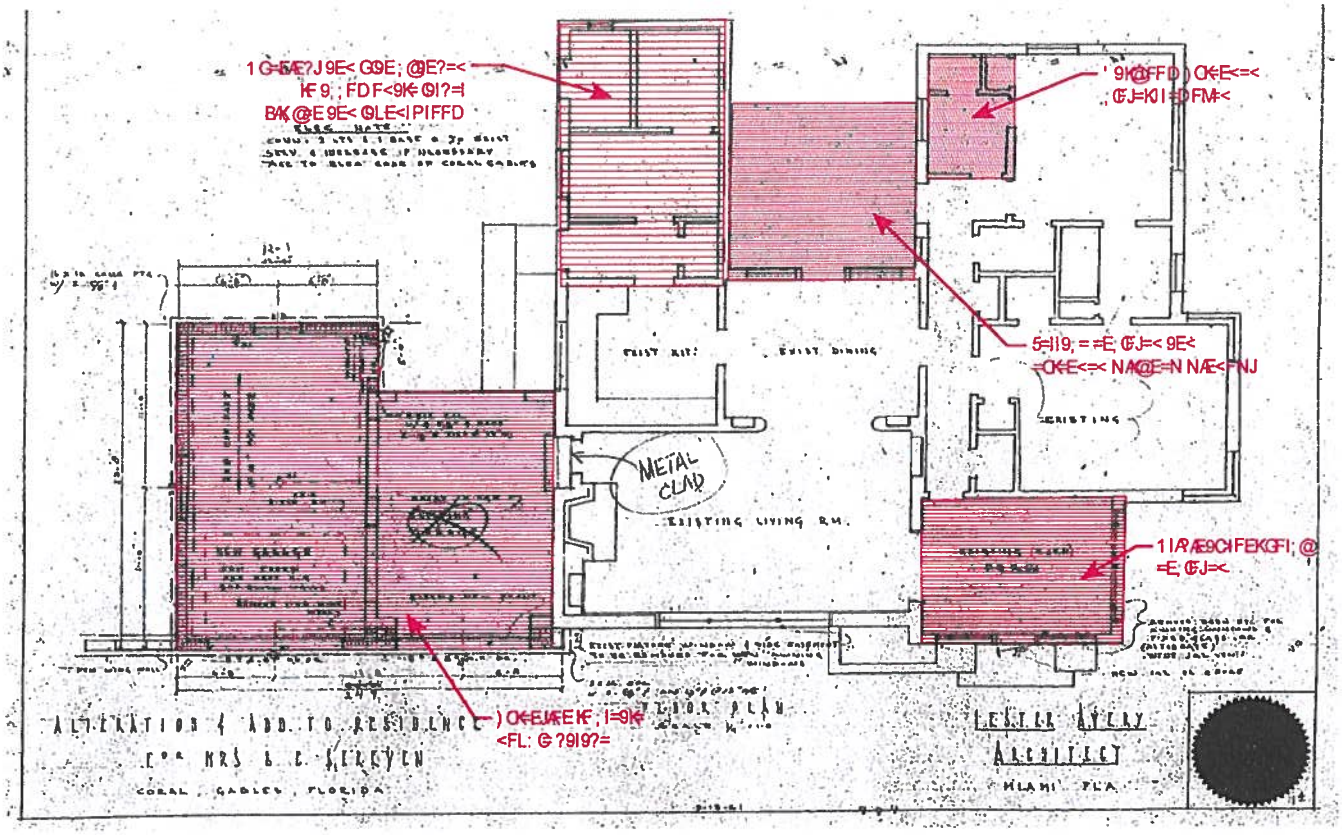
1961 Renovation removes the flat facade into 4 separate masses along the front, giving a push-pull feeling instead of a horizontal, single surface facade as intentioned.

Floor Plan Comparison Study

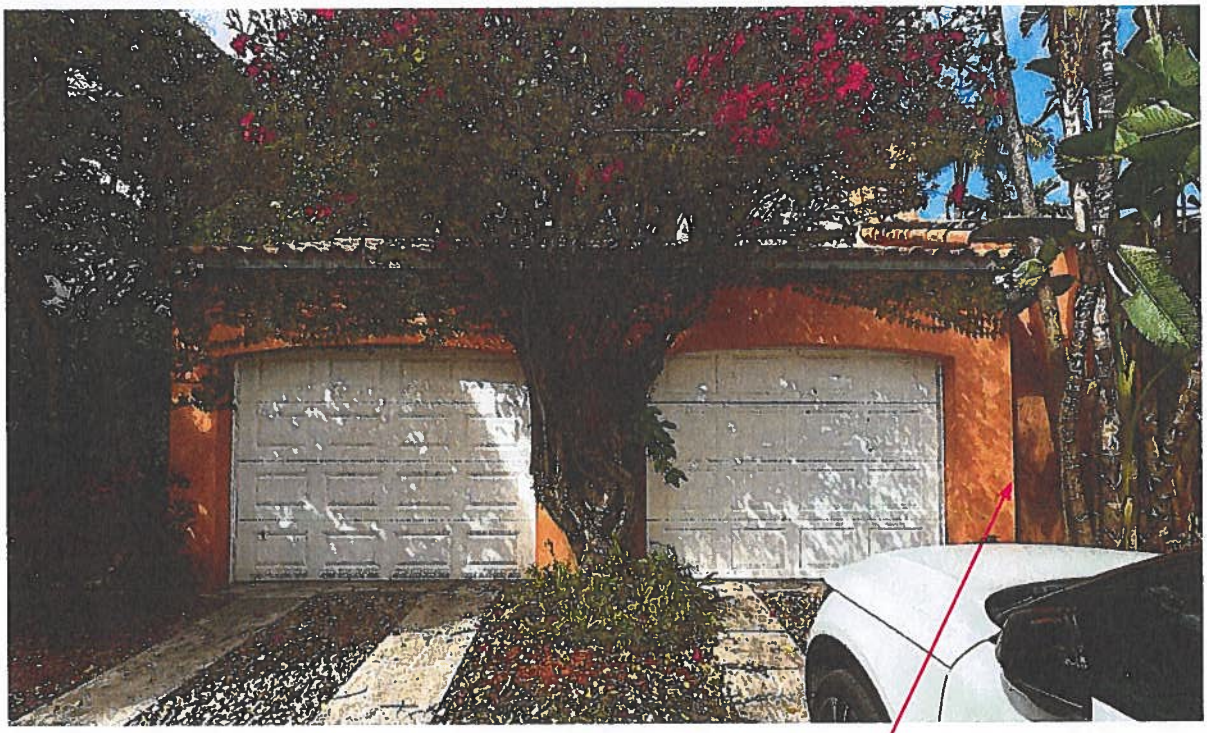
Original Plan



1961 Renovation Annotated

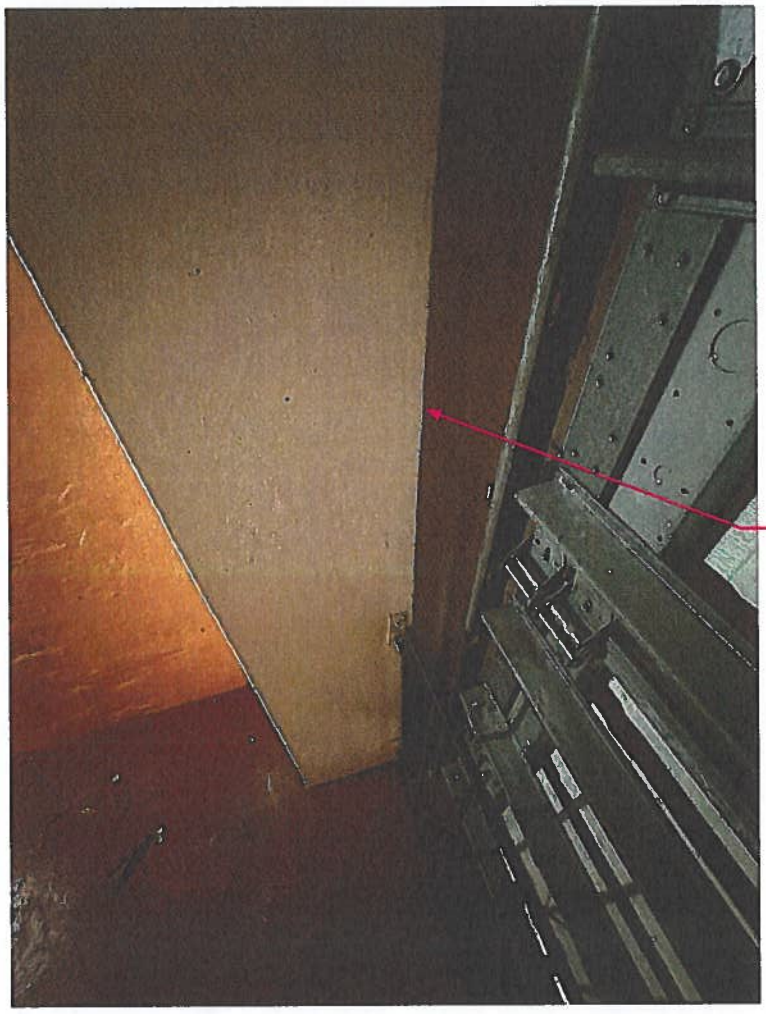


GARAGE ADD-ON



Garage extension removes original carport, changing intention and facade significantly.

New addition removes transparency of facade, and openness to backyard.



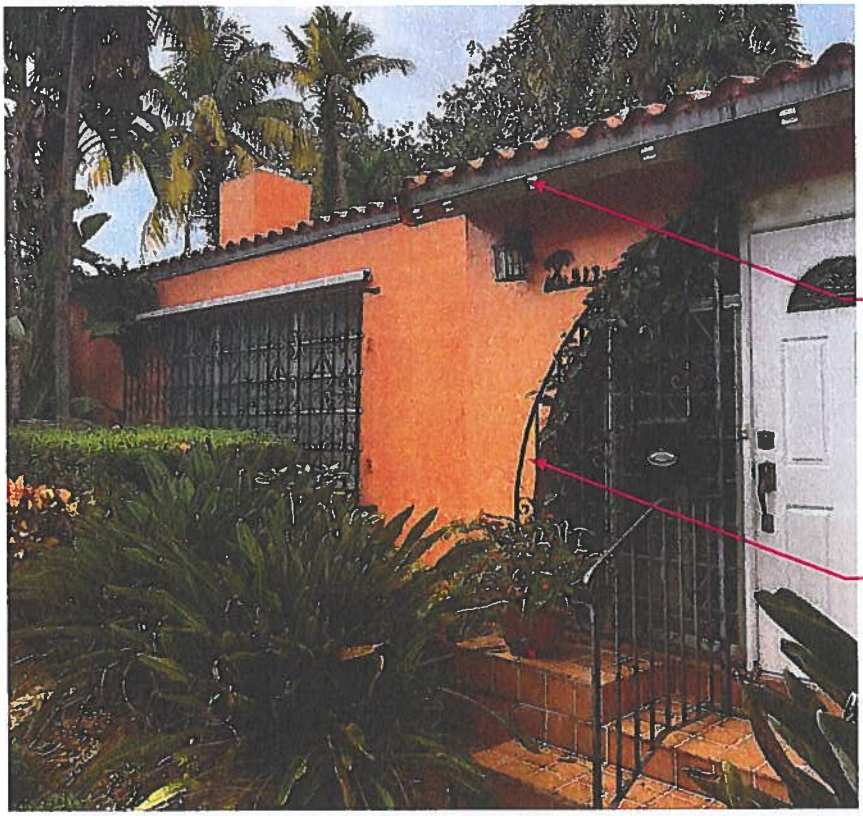
New column and wall tied into original column with rebar and cannot be separated without extensive cutting, reconstruction, and cost.

Garage protrudes from original facade

Side entry to home visible, originally accessible from exterior.

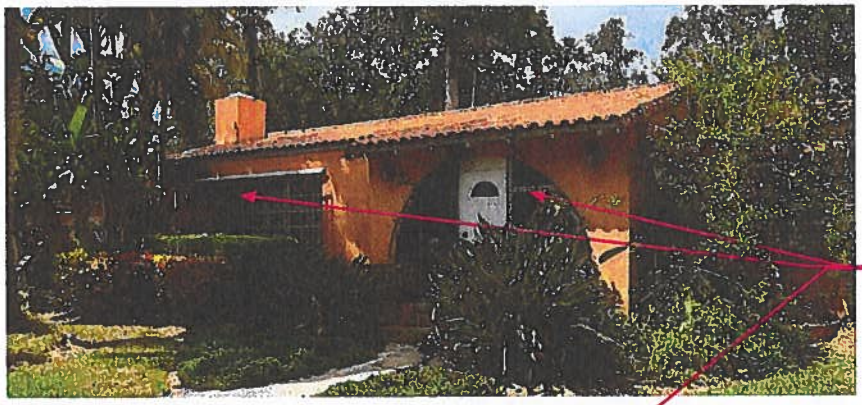
Original opening seen as rectilinear, not eyebrow as original plans intention.

Ornamental Elements



Exposed rafters show intention of ornamentation on home, not minimal traditional modern touches.

Semi-Circular entry difficult and expensive, not cost-effective as per minimal traditional historic trend.



Decorative Security Guards ornament entire home.

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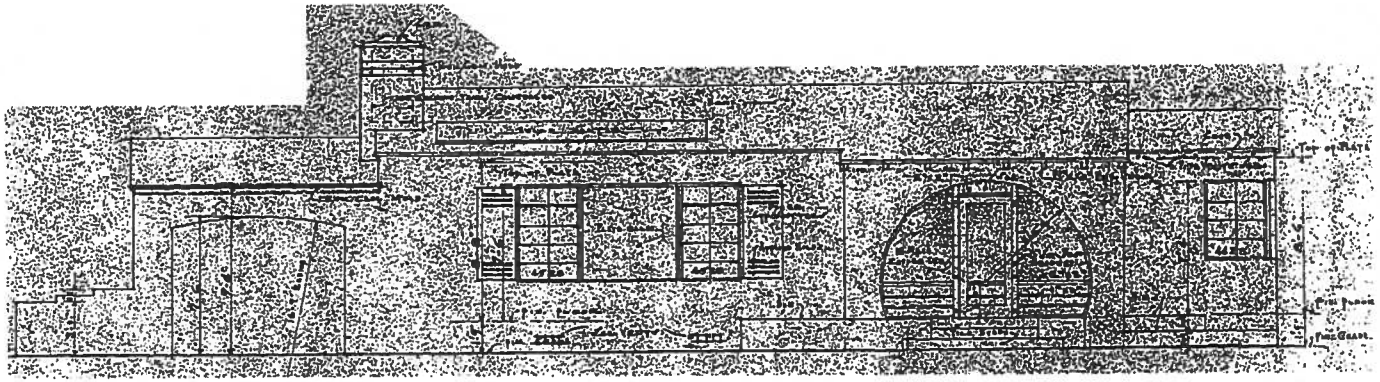

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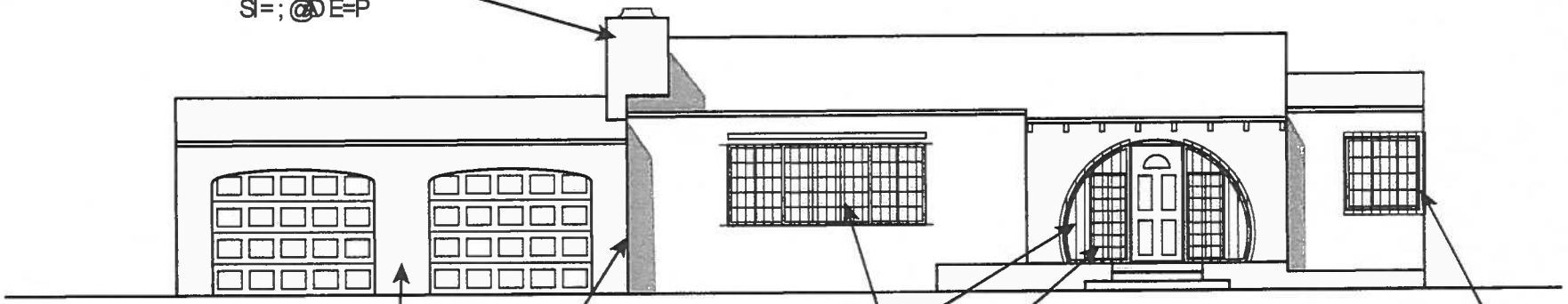

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This would not be allowed if asked to do to a historically designated property today.

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This would not be allowed if asked to do to a historically designated property today.

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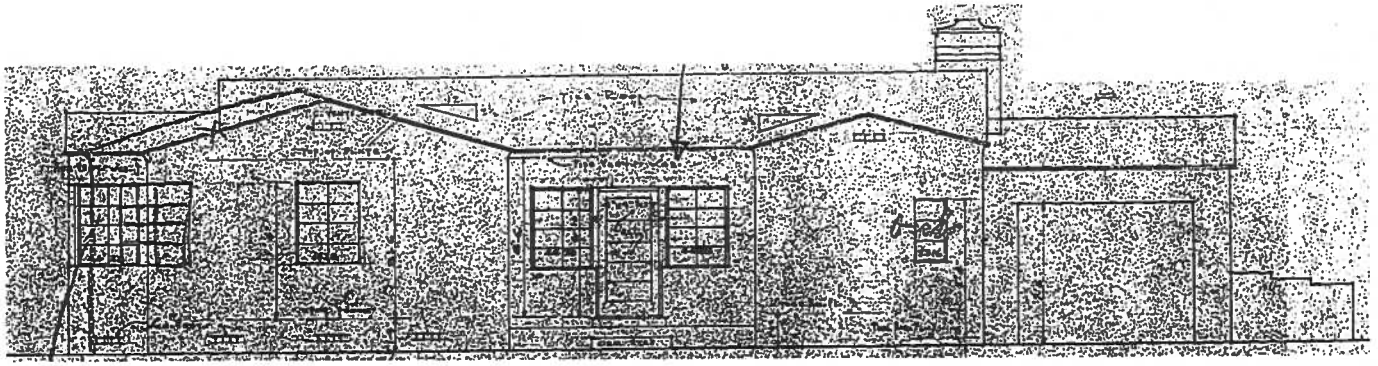

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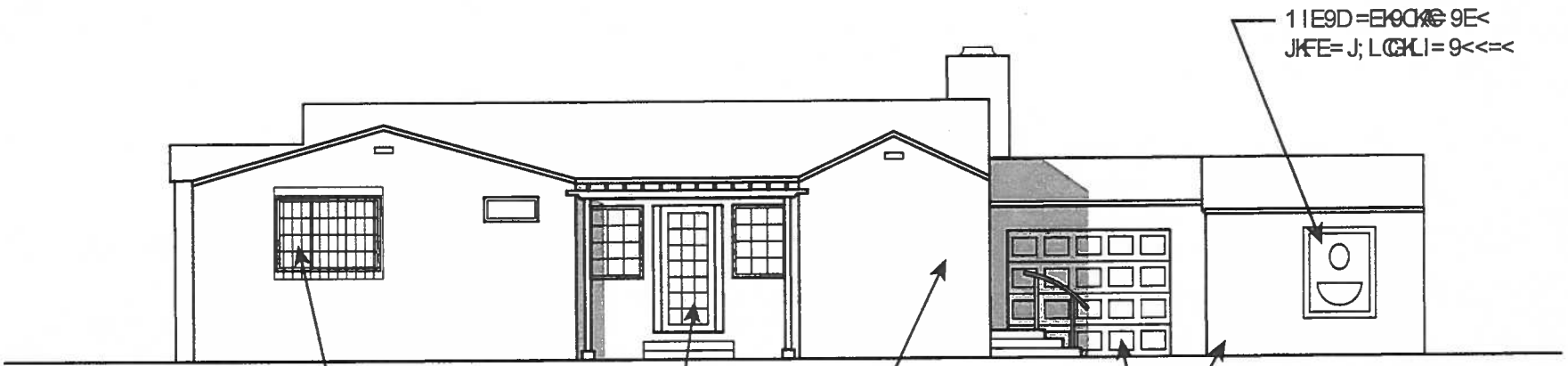

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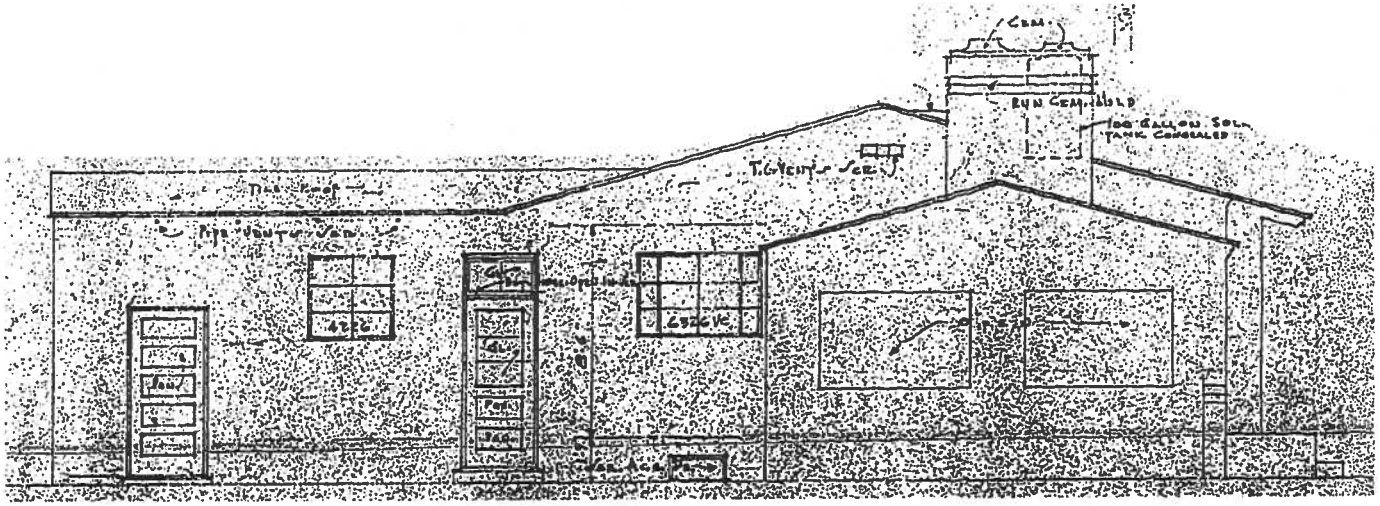

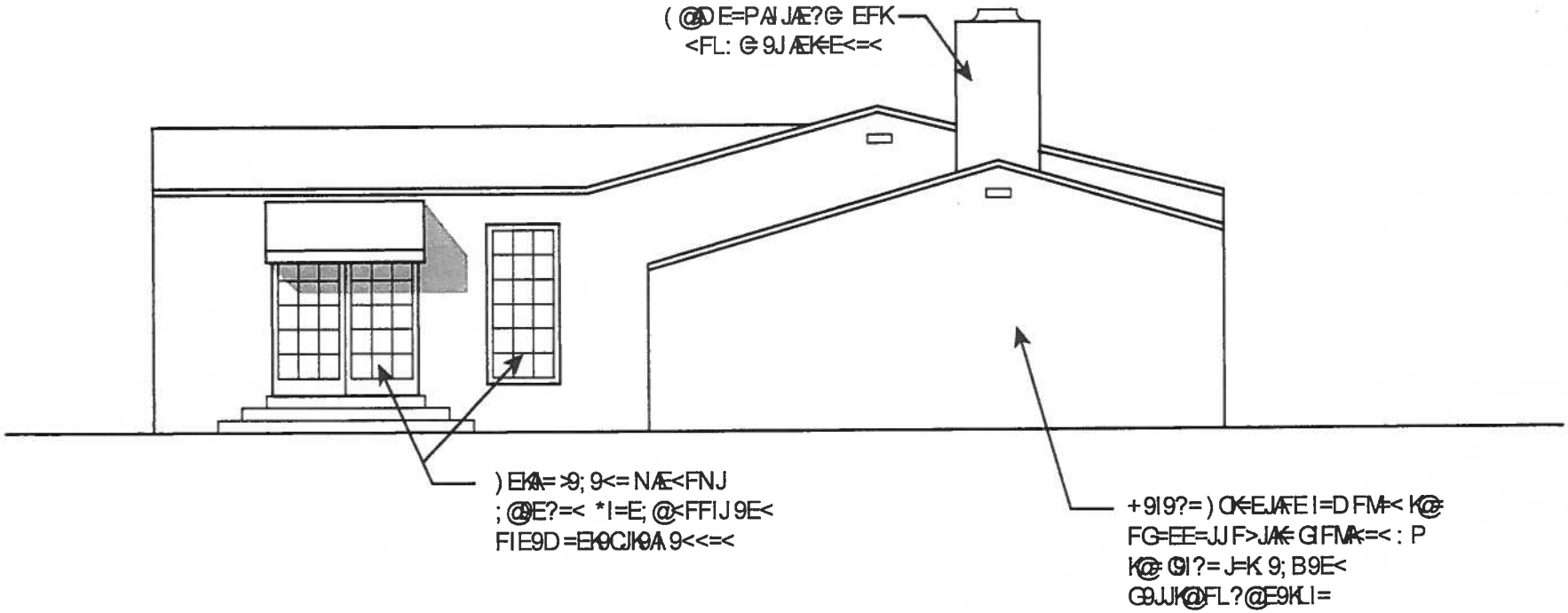
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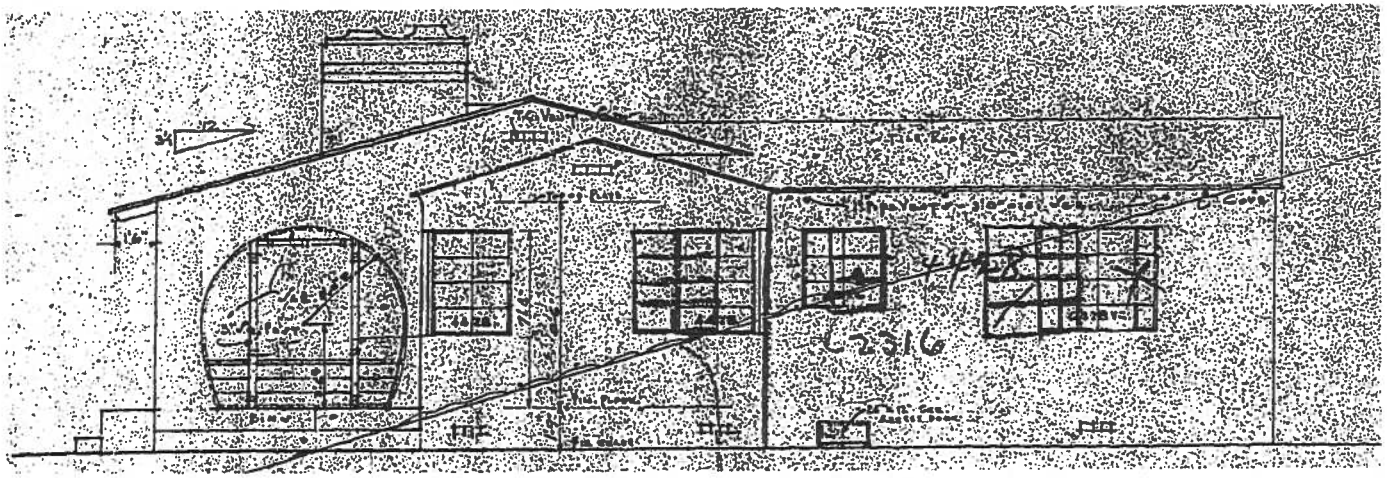

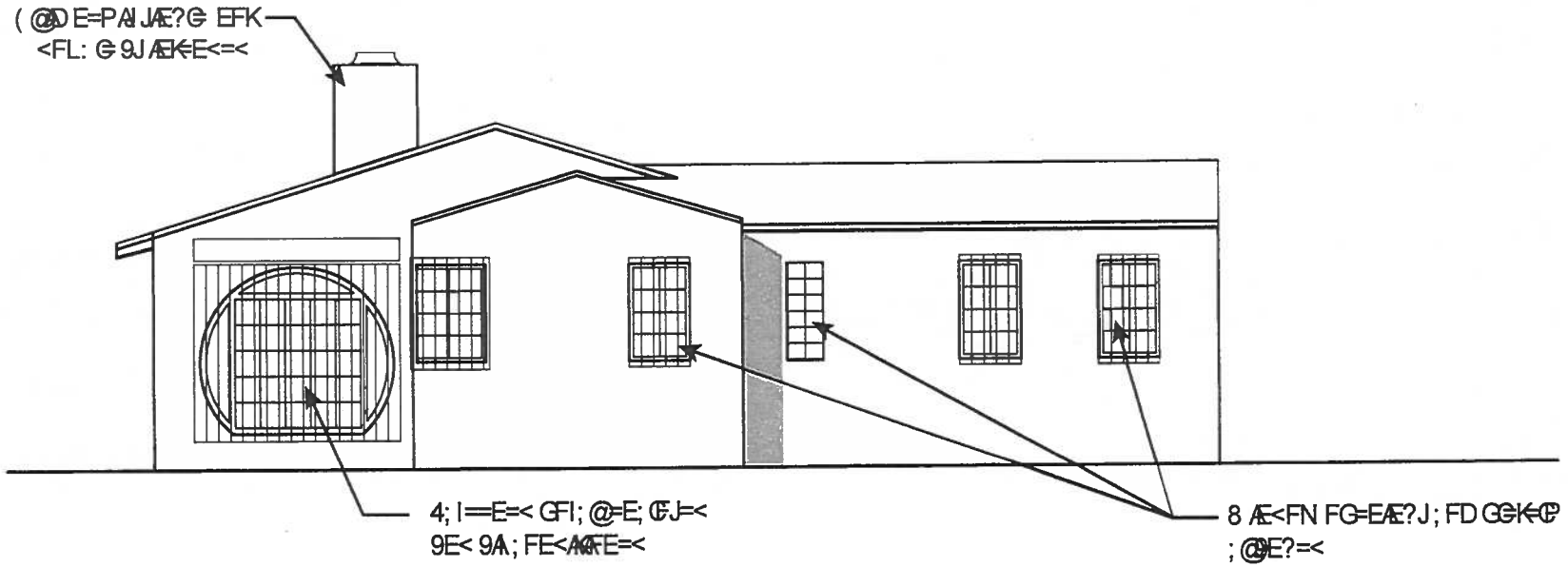
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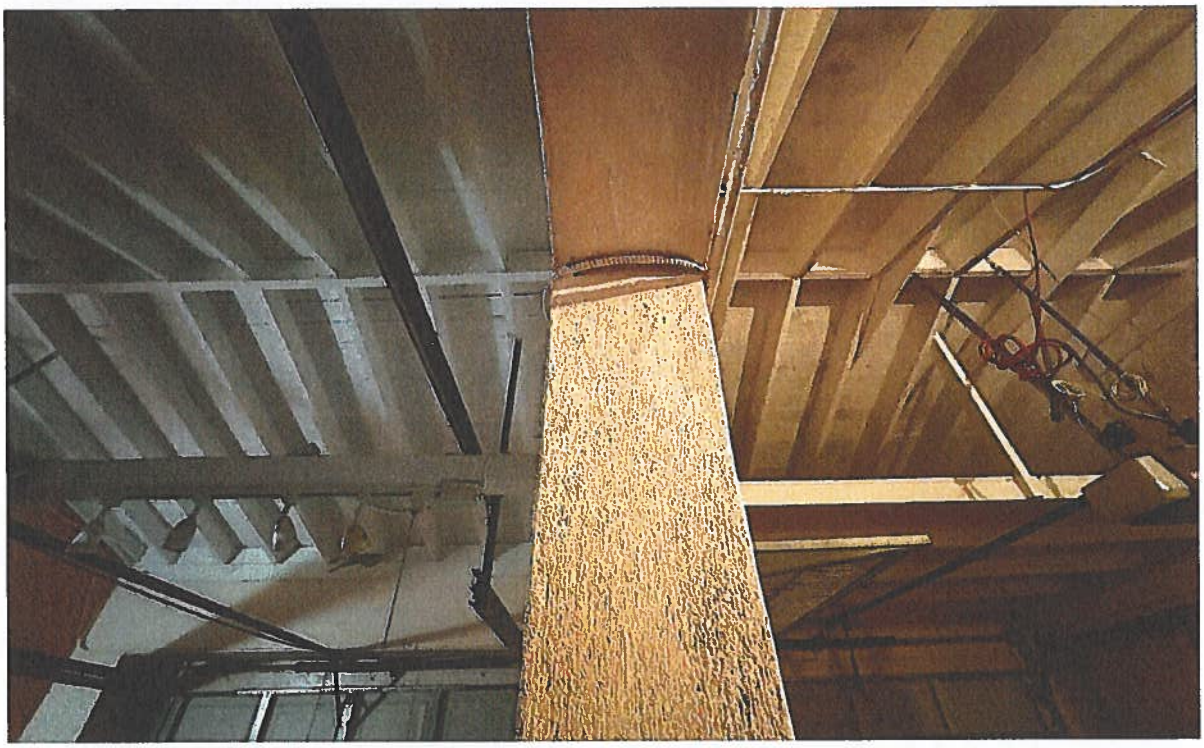
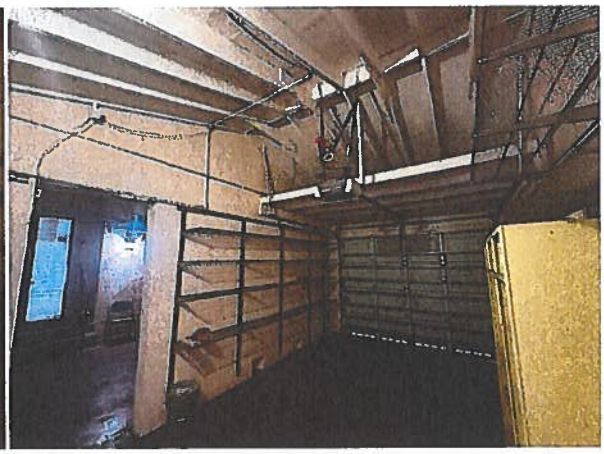
Garage Extension Interior Photos



Both garages share center roof joist and roof system. If tried to reverse, most likely entire roof would need to be replaced at extensive cost to client.

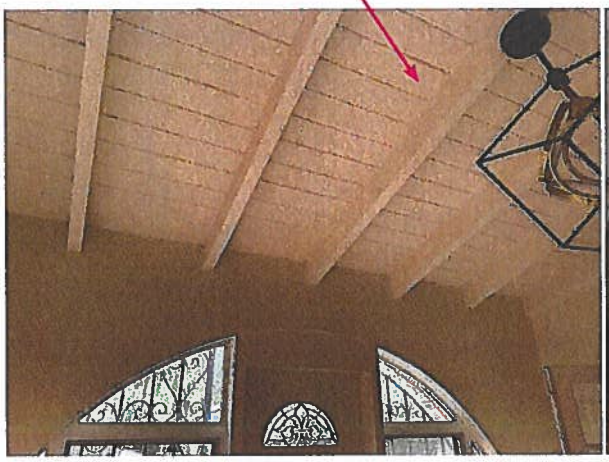
Rear of new garage extension.



Front of new garage extension.

Enclosed Porches with HVAC Added in

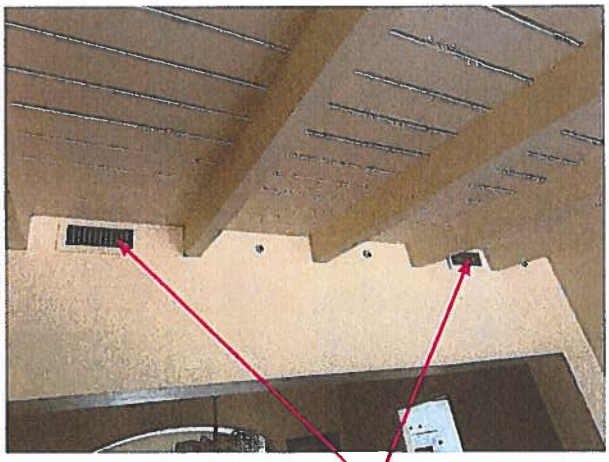
Roof area missing any insulation when enclosed



Entry courtyard was originally screened in, and now is interior.

Air vents added when porch enclosed.

Roof area missing any insulation when enclosed



Rear courtyard originally screened in, and now opened into the home. New tile looks laid, and AC added in room.

Air vents added when porch enclosed.

Openings Around Home Completely Changed

Openings on Kitchen remodel changed West facade extensively. Openings cannot be reversed without extensive concrete work and cost.

Ornamental stairs added in extension

Openings on East wall changed over renovations. Openings cannot be reversed without extensive concrete work and cost.

Openings on rear wall changed extensively. Openings cannot be reversed without extensive concrete work and cost.

Renovation and Restoration Estimate

DIV	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT	DETAILS
1	**General Requirements**		
	Rough Cleaning	$ 500.00	Interior Cleaning before Paint
	Final Cleaning	$ 5,000.00	
	Trash Pickup	$ 10,000.00	20 Trash Pickups
	Portable Toilets	$ 1,800.00	1 year
	Site Fence	$ 2,500.00	
	Construction Surveying	$ 5,700.00	Elevation Cert and Site Surveying
	Permitting Fees	$ 7,000.00	Pulling Sub Permits, Shop Reviews
	Temp Power	$ 2,600.00	
	Total	$ 35,100.00	
2	**SITE WORK**		
	Selective Demolition	$ 25,000.00	Including Grade Work
	Landscaping	$ 25,000.00	Per 8" of Tree
	Driveway and Paving	$ 10,900.00	Laying Pavers, Driveway Approach.
	Total	$ 60,900.00	
3	**CONCRETE**		
	Shell Contract	$ 112,500.00	Including New Slab Pour
	Concrete Testing	$ 600.00	
		$ -	
	Total	$ 113,100.00	
4	**MASONRY**		
	Brick Pavers	$ 3,840.00	
	Total	$ 3,840.00	
6	**WOOD, PLASTICS & COMPOSITES**		
	Kitchen Cabinets	$ 20,000.00	Allowance
	Bath Vanities	$ 10,000.00	Allowance
	Master Bath Vanity	$ 6,000.00	Allowance
	Baseboards	$ 2,000.00	
	Truss System	$ 28,000.00	New Truss System
	Total	$ 66,000.00	
7	**THERMAL AND MOISTURE PROT.**		
	Roof Waterproofing	$ 60,000.00	
	Total	$ 60,000.00	
8	**DOOR FRAMES & HARDWARE**		

	Interior Door & Hardware Package	$	16,500.00	Wood Veneer Solid Core Doors
	Fire Doors	$	2,000.00	
	Overhead Doors	$	5,000.00	
	Door and Frame Installation	$	2,560.00	
	Total	$	26,060.00	
8.5	**GLASS**			
	Impact Glass Doors	$	7,600.00	
	Impact Windows Panels	$	10,500.00	
	Impact Storefront	$	10,500.00	
	Impact Sliding Door Panels	$	7,000.00	
	Shower Enclosure	$	8,000.00	
	Vanity Mirrors	$	750.00	
	Total	$	44,350.00	
9	**FINISHES**			
	Interior Framing and Drywall Packag	$	60,000.00	
	Insulation Package	$	10,000.00	included above
	Exterior Stucco	$	22,500.00	
	Total	$	92,500.00	
9.5	**TILE & STONE**			
	Main Floor Porcelein Tile	$	16,000.00	Allowance
	Terrace Tile	$	6,000.00	Allowance
	Wet Wall Tile	$	3,500.00	Allowance
	Tile Installation	$	53,500.00	
	Kitchen Countertops	$	3,600.00	Allowance
	Master Bath Countertop	$	1,200.00	Allowance
	Countertop Installation	$	2,560.00	
	Total	$	86,360.00	
9.9	**PAINT**			
	Interior & Exterior Painting	$	13,500.00	
	Total	$	13,500.00	
10	**SPECIALTIES**			
	Kitchen Appliance Package	$	9,000.00	
	Mailboxes	$	200.00	
	Total	$	9,200.00	
22	**PLUMBING**			
	Plumbing Materials and Labor	$	32,000.00	
	Plumbing Fixture Package	$	6,000.00	Allowance

	Water Heater	$	1,500.00	
	Total	$	39,500.00	
23	**HVAC**			
	HVAC Materials & Labor	$	30,000.00	
		$	-	
	Total	$	40,800.00	
26	**ELECTRICAL**			
	Electrical Materials and Labor	$	60,000.00	
	Lighting Package	$	10,000.00	Allowance
		$	-	
	Total	$	70,000.00	
33	**UTILITIES**			
	Install New Water Meter	$	400.00	
	Install New Electric Meter Box	$	800.00	
		$	-	
	Total	$	1,200.00	
0	**TOTALS**			
	Sub-Total	$	762,410.00	
	Contingency	$	114,361.50	
	Contractor's Fee	$	175,354.30	
	PROJECT TOTAL	$	1,052,125.80	

DESIGN SPACE ARCHITECTURE

Document for:
Inspection Report

Local Historic Designation Number:
LHD 2022-13

Subject Property:
517 Aragon Avenue
Coral Gables, FL

March 10, 2023
City of Coral Gables
Historic Preservation Department
405 Biltmore Way
Coral Gables, FL 33134

To the Authority Having Jurisdiction,

Please accept this letter as a formal report as it relates to the inspection performed by Design Space Architecture, inc. for the residential unit referenced above. The purpose of the inspection was to evaluate the structural integrity of the building, and to identify any defects that may add a layer of complexity during any renovation efforts. The scope of our inspection consisted of a visual Site inspection by a Registered Architect. The scope of our inspection consisted of the following:

Means and Method of inspections:

A - Visual Site inspection by a Registered Architect.

B - Locating reinforcing steel using a Concrete Covermeter, ZBL-R630 made by BO Science & Technology Co.

C - Photographic Documentation of existing Condition by hand-held camera and aerial drone camera.

1) **Existing Masonry Walls:**

The main structural walls are comprised of 8" wide concrete masonry units with grout filles cells at certain locations of the house. The filled-in CMU was scanned to check and verify that steel reinforcement was used (see point "B" in means and method of inspections on page 1). It was determined that filled cells with #4 rebar (or the equivalent size rebar during time of construction) were sparingly used in the original CMU walls for the house. The sizing of the rebar and the spacing/locations of the rebar do not align with current building codes, as expected in a house form the 1930's. The existing walls in the original house will require extensive reinforcement if the house is to be renovated and brought up to current building code standards. All new reinforcement bars in the filled cells will need to be embedded at least 6" to the existing concrete tie-beam and to the existing concrete foundation. All reinforcement bars must be lap spliced at least 36" and re-poured with concrete. As for the two-car garage addition, a healthy amount of #5 rebar was located along its bearing walls and the spacing appears to be much more aligned with building codes. A filled cell with (1) #5 rebar appears to be provided at about 48" along the garage addition CMU partitions.

2) **Floor Joist repairs:**

The existing Floor joists in certain areas of the house were noted to be disrepair, and presumably succumbing to enough deflection where someone decided to support the joists from below with a steel I-beam under the floor joists (See images A & B). The steel beams were positioned under the existing floor joists without the use of metal wood connectors. The steel beam was placed on 8"x8" concrete blocks with no steel reinforcement. The concrete blocks appear to be bearing over a 4" thick concrete footing over compacted gravel. This method of repair is not appropriate and, as seen in the image "A" preceding this report, has already begun to fail. The floor joists repairs will need to be re-constructed if the house undergoes renovation.

3) **Floor Joist damage:**

A small number of existing floor joists were identified to be experiencing degradation and slight deflection (See images C & D). While the joists are not yet in complete disrepair, the same proposed method of reinforcement used to reconstruct the existing floor joists repairs should be used for the areas where the floor joists are damaged.

4) **Roof Tiles:**

The roof was inspected through high-definition imagery provided by ana aerial drone camera. The observations resulted in the discovery of a large number of "S Tiles" being completely broken or damaged. While evidence of leakage was not found, the roof will likely need to be replaced in the very near future.

As a routine matter, in order to avoid possible misunderstanding nothing in the report should be construed directly or indirectly as a guarantee for any portion of the structure. To the best of our knowledge and ability this report represents an accurate appraisal of the current condition of the installation based upon careful evaluation of observed conditions, to the extent reasonably possible. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (305) 960-7221.

Respectfully,

STATE OF FLORIDA
JOSE I. CARDONA
AR101665
REGISTERED ARCHITECT

Jose I. Cardona, AIA, NCARB
Principal Architect at Design Space Architecture, Inc.

WWW.DSPAEC.COM
HEYTHERE@DSPAEC.COM
9990 SW 77th Ave, PH-15
MIAMI, FL, 33156
(305) 960 - 7221

Photographic Documentation:

Image A

This image show the CMU supports toppled-over due to improper design, means, and methods for the supports.

Image B

This image shows the CMU supports lacking connections to the steel beam. Further, the steel beam lacks proper connections and fasteners to the wood joists it is supporting.

Image C

This image shows the wood floor joists with degradation as well as various attempts to "scab" the joists, presumably due to excessive deflection.

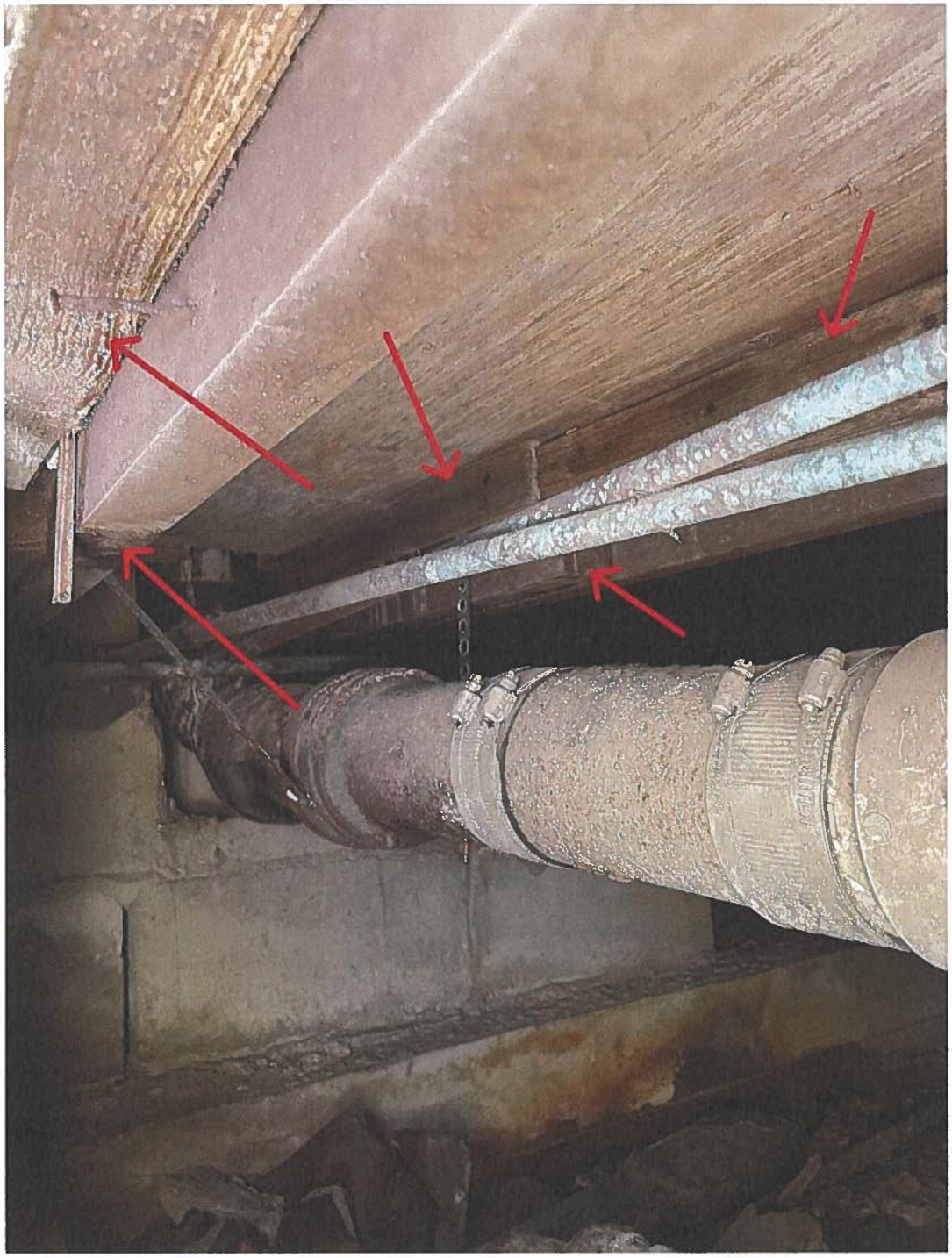


Image D

This image shows the wood floor joists with degradation as well as various attempts to "scab" the joists, presumably due to excessive deflection.

Image E

This image shows several "S Tile" roofing tiles either broken or damaged.

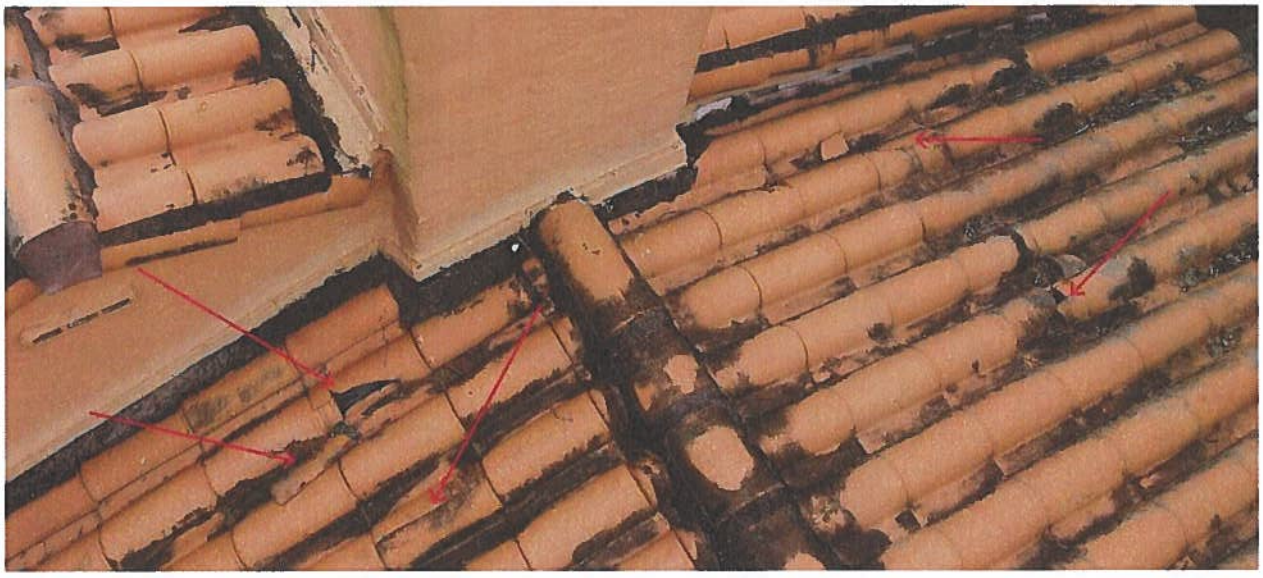


Image F

This image shows several "S Tile" roofing tiles either broken or damaged.

Image G

This image shows several "S Tile" roofing tiles either broken or damaged.

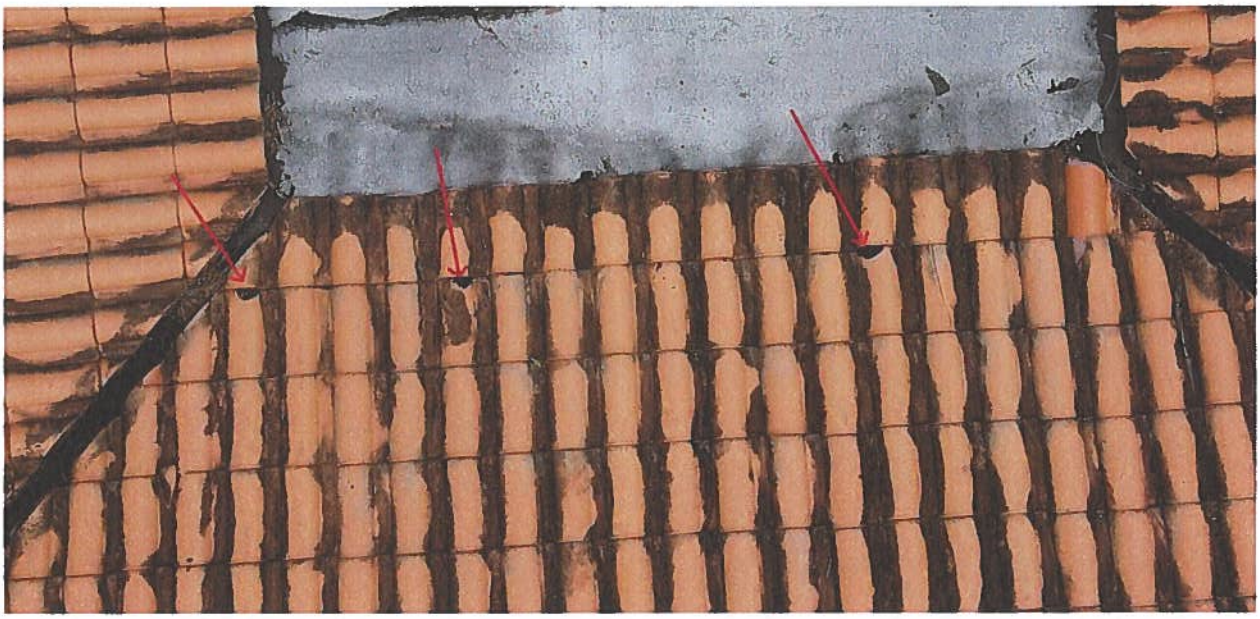


Image H

This image shows several "S Tile" roofing tiles either broken or damaged.

Image I

This image shows several "S Tile" roofing tiles either broken or damaged.

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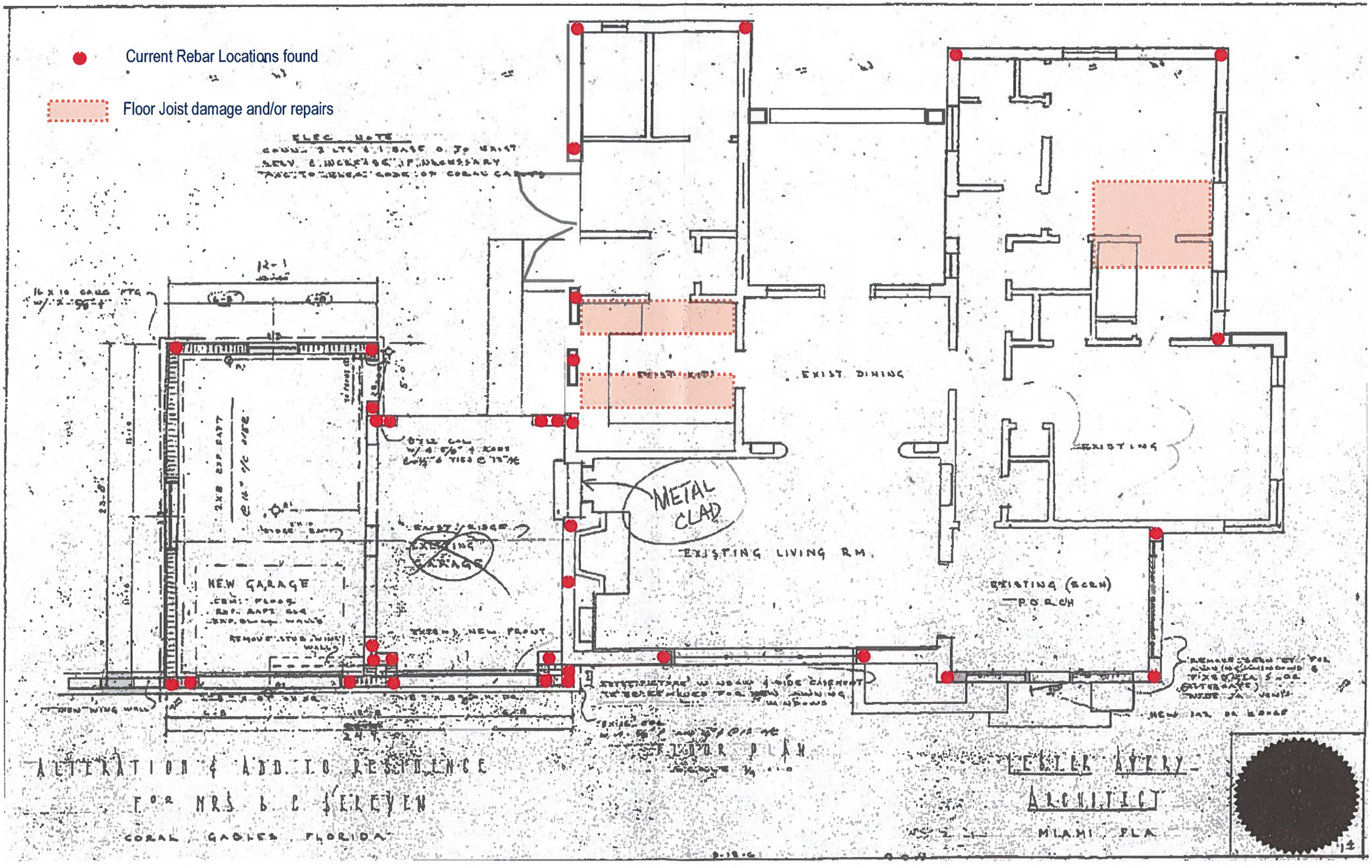
Image J

This image shows the overall roof shot of the existing roof in need of replacement.

Current Rebar Locations found

Floor Joist damage and/or repairs



Document for:
Jose I. Cardona Resume

March 2, 2023
Jose I. Cardona
Principal Architect at Design Space Architecture, Inc.
9990 SW 77th Avenue, Penthouse 15
Miami, FL 33156

Jose I. Cardona, AIA, NCARB

EDUCATION

Boston Architectural College
Master of Architecture — 2019

University of Florida
Bachelor of Design in Architecture — 2012

Miami-Dade College
Associate in Arts in Architecture — 2009

AWARDS + ACCOLADES

The Edwin T. Steffian Centennial Award Recipient, Master's Thesis Excellence	2019
Hospitality Design Award (Upscale Restaurants); Drunken Dragon, Miami Beach, FL	2015
Student Work selected for University of Florida NAAB Re-Accreditation process	2011 - 2012
Gallery X Finalist, Luminaire X's Young Architects award ceremony	2009
Student of the year nominee, Miami-Dade College	2009

EDUCATOR EXPERIENCE

Boston Architectural College
Online Master of Architecture, Professor — 2020-2022
Aided in meeting with students individually and in groups to discuss thesis concepts and reinforce graphics standards for their projects and presentations. Further, I served as a communicative gateway by evaluating student's projects/assignments and reported their progress to the thesis professor.

University of Florida
ACE Mentorship Program — 2011-2012
Provided mentorship and design guidance for lower division students and helped engage high school students that were interested in pursuing a career in Architecture.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Design Space Architecture, Inc.
Principal Architect — Feb. 2020 - Present
Business development, business planning, design development, and project coordination.

Studio Lamas Architects, LLC
Junior Partner — Sept. 2012 - Feb. 2020
Meet with prospective clients, practice management, proposal and contract production, Architectural designing, project management, construction administration, and Junior Architect mentorship.

RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE

Historic Private Residence – 1403 Obispo Avenue, Coral Gables, FL – Minimal Traditional Exterior/structural modifications to rear of residence, rear wooden deck and wooden pergola.	Built in 1947
Historic Private Residence – 1309 Obispo Avenue, Coral Gables, FL – Spanish Revival Structural repairs, Electrical upgrades, interior renovation.	Built in 1946
Private Residence – 1116 Asturia Avenue, Coral Gables, FL Structural repairs, complete building system upgrades, interior and exterior renovations	Built in 1923
Private Residence – 700 Navarre Street, Coral Gables, FL Structural repairs, complete building system upgrades, interior and exterior renovations	Built in 1925
Private Residence – 1131 Venetia Avenue, Coral Gables, FL Structural repairs, interior and exterior renovations	Built in 1926
Private Residence – 535 Darco Avenue, Coral Gables, FL Structural repairs, complete building system upgrades, interior and exterior renovations.	Built in 1951
Private Residence – 136 Santander Avenue, Coral Gables, FL Structural repairs consultant.	Built in 1954
Private Residence – 1425 Mercado Avenue, Coral Gables, FL Structural repairs, complete building system upgrades, interior and exterior renovations	Built in 1971

MEMBERSHIPS

Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables	2023
Florida Trust for Historic Preservation - Keystone Member	2023
American Institute of Architects	2020 - Present
Miami Industrial Arts Association	2017 - Present
Woodworkers Guild of America	2016 - Present
American Institute of Architecture Students	2007 - 2009